



ACEPO'S CHILDREN'S CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. Our values

African Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (ACEPO) does not allow any partner, supplier, sub- contractor, agent or any individual engaged by ACEPO to engage in any form of child abuse, maltreatment or poor safeguarding practice. A child is anyone under the age of 18, and all children have an equal right to protection regardless of any personal characteristic, including their age, gender, ability, culture, racial origin, religious belief and sexual identity.

This policy applies to all persons working for us or on our behalf in any capacity, including employees at all levels, directors, officers, agency workers, seconded workers, volunteers, interns, agents, contractors, external consultants, third-party representatives, suppliers and business partners. It applies during or outside of working hours, every day of the year.

2. What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse consists of anything, which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospect of a safe and healthy development into adulthood.

This policy covers all forms of child abuse. ACEPO recognizes five categories of child abuse, which are sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and exploitation. Other sub-categories may be adopted from time to time. The policy also covers any poor safeguarding practice, which results in or creates a risk of child abuse or harm.

Definitions of Child Abuse:

Sexual Abuse	Sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Adult males do not solely perpetrate sexual abuse. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.
Physical	Physical abuse is the non-accidental use of physical force that deliberately or inadvertently causes a risk of/ or actual injury to a child. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing non-accidental physical harm to a child. Physical harm can also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness or temporary, permanent injury or disability of a child.

Emotional	Emotional abuse involves doing harm to a child’s emotional, intellectual, mental or psychological development. This may occur as an isolated event or on an ongoing basis. Emotional abuse includes but is not limited to any humiliating or degrading treatment (e.g., bad name calling, threats, yelling/screaming, cursing, teasing, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming etc.), failure to meet a child’s emotional needs, and rejecting, ignoring, terrorizing, isolating or confining a child.
Neglect	Neglect includes but is not limited to failing to provide adequate food, sufficient or seasonally appropriate clothing and /or shelter. Neglect is also failing to prevent harm; failing to ensure adequate supervision; failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment or providing inappropriate medical treatment (e.g. administering medication when not authorized); or failing to provide a safe physical environment (e.g. exposure to violence, unsafe programming location, unsafe sleeping practices, releasing a child to an unauthorized adult, access to weapons or harmful objects, failing to child- proof a space that children will occupy etc.). It can also be ACEPO staff, partners, contractors, suppliers and sub-grantees failing to apply minimum requirements as set out in mandatory procedures.
Exploitation	Child exploitation is an umbrella term used to describe the abuse of children who are forced, tricked, coerced or trafficked into exploitative activities. For ACEPO child exploitation includes modern slavery and trafficking of children and children forced or recruited into armed conflict. Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity; in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur with the use of technology. Within ACEPO child sexual abuse and exploitation also includes child early and forced marriage.

<p>Child Labour</p>	<p>Child Labour is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It is work that: is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. If a young person, under the age of 18 is part of an apprenticeship scheme within the statutory law of the country and does not meet any of the above, this would not be considered by ACEPO as child labour.</p> <p>However, any partner, supplier, contractor or sub-contractor must inform ACEPO of the name of any apprentice who will be directly involved with our work. For ACEPO it is not acceptable for any staff or representatives to engage anyone under the age of 18 to work as domestic help in their place of work or at home. Child labour may also be a form of child slavery.</p> <p>Child slavery is the transfer of a young person (under 18) to another person so that the young person can be exploited.</p>
<p>Zero Tolerance</p>	<p>At ACEPO, we have a culture of zero-tolerance for all forms of abuse and mistreatment, including Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying. This means that every single concern is fully responded to and where necessary prompt action (including conducting an investigation and taking disciplinary action, if applicable) is taken.</p> <p>It means that we will hold our people to account against the same standards and subject them to the same processes, as everyone else regardless of their position or reputation within the organization.</p>

Child abuse and exploitation is a violation of fundamental **child and human rights**. It may also be a criminal act. ACEPO has a zero-tolerance approach when it comes taking action to protecting children from all forms of exploitation and abuse. We are committed to acting ethically and with integrity in all our business dealings and relationships and to implementing and enforcing effective systems and controls to ensure child exploitation and abuse is not taking place anywhere in our own business or in any of our supply chains or partnerships.

ACEPO is also committed to ensuring there is transparency in our own dealings and in our approach to preventing and responding to any child safeguarding violations throughout our supply chains, and relationships with third parties, consistent with our national and international disclosure obligations, and shall comply with all applicable laws, statutes, regulations and codes from time to time in force, including:

- ☐ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC);
- ☐ UN Secretary General’s Bulletin: Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse;
- ☐ UK Modern Slavery Act 2015;
- ☐ US Trafficking Victims Protection Act 2000;
- ☐ USAID ADS 303 Mandatory Standard Provision, Trafficking in Persons (July 2015); and
- ☐ International Labour Standards on Child Labour and Forced Labour.

Where the guidance in this policy conflicts with any applicable laws or regulations, the higher standard must be observed at all times.

3. Our approach to preventing the abuse and exploitation of children

ACEPO is committed to preventing child abuse and exploitation, including through the following means:

Recruitment: ACEPO is committed to recruit only staff who are suited to work with children and to apply strict child safe recruitment practices.

Environment: ACEPO will ensure that anyone who represents our organization must actively create a safe environment for children who come into their contact with the organization

Programming: ACEPO undertakes to have all activities and programmes of work including during the response to humanitarian emergencies are assessed for risks to children which are reduced or removed by all means within our control.

Awareness: Ensuring that all staff, representatives and third parties connected to ACEPO are aware of the high standards of behavior and conduct expected of them to protect children from any form of abuse and exploitation in their private and working lives.

Prevention: Ensuring, through awareness and good practice, that staff and those who work with ACEPO minimize the risks of any form of child abuse and exploitation, including but by no means limited to conducting relevant vetting and background checks of staff as part of their recruitment process.

Reporting: Ensuring that all staff and those who work with ACEPO are clear on what steps to take where suspicions or concerns arise regarding allegations of child abuse or exploitation

Responding: Ensuring that immediate action is taken to identify and address reports of child abuse and exploitation, and to ensure the safety and well-being of the child/ren involved.

In this way, we shall make ACEPO safe for children and by creating a child safe organization we honor their rights and our aspirations. To help identify incidents of child abuse, exploitation and poor safeguarding practice the following are examples of prohibited behavior and practice, which are not tolerated by ACEPO:

- a) Physically, sexually, or emotionally harming or threatening to harm a child. This includes beating them or any other form of physical or humiliating discipline
- b) Engaging in any form of sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18, regardless of age of consent or custom locally
- c) Exchanging money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviors. This includes exchange for assistance that is due to beneficiaries and their families
- d) Sending private messages to children you have met through ACEPO, for example private messaging on social media or by mobile phone
- e) Engaging in sexual activity or have a sexual relationship with anyone under the age of 18 years regardless of the age of majority/consent or custom locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.
- f) Engaging anyone under the age of 18 in exploitative and harmful labor
- g) Employees engaging in commercial exploitation of children, for example a hotel employee facilitating sexual abuse by hotel guests or indirectly
- h) Causing the death of or seriously injuring a child due to reckless or careless driving
- i) Failing to ensure the required health and safety at construction or other sites where services are being provided and work implemented on behalf of ACEPO

- j) Failing to follow the law or required procedures and regulations which result in the death or harm of a child
- k) Sleeping in the same room as a child with whom they are working with unless exceptional circumstances apply and previous permission has been obtained from their manager
- l) Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
- m) Discriminate against, show unfair differential treatment or favor to particular children to the exclusion of others.
- n) Spending excessive time alone with children away from others in a manner which could be interpreted as inappropriate.
- o) Placing themselves in a position where they are made vulnerable to allegations of misconduct

The commitment we expect from you

ACEPO expects the same high standards from all of our partners, contractors, suppliers and all third parties working with or for ACEPO, including taking measures to prohibit their staff and representatives from engaging in any child sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or any other form of abuse or exploitation in their work and personal lives.

- a) You must have a zero-tolerance policy on Child abuse and exploitation and take all measures available to you to prevent and respond to actual, attempted or threatened forms of child abuse and exploitation involving ACEPO staff or representatives, or the organization's employees or representatives that arises during performance of the terms of this Agreement.
- b) You must ensure that your staff members and those working with ACEPO under your control are fully aware of this policy and encourage them to report incidents of suspected or actual child abuse involving ACEPO staff or representatives, or the organization's employees or representatives that arises during performance of their employment contract.
- c) You must **immediately report** any suspicion of child abuse or exploitation occurring in ACEPO, your organization or the organizations you work with, that arises during the performance of the employment contract with ACEPO. Failure to report will be treated as a serious violation and may result in termination of any agreement with ACEPO.
- d) When you or any staff working for ACEPO under your control suspect or become aware of a child safeguarding concern in relation to work for ACEPO, you are obliged to: -
 - act quickly and immediately report suspicions or knowledge of a safeguarding concern or incident to a relevant contact at ACEPO or you can contact ACEPO's Deputy Director via email kadar@acepoafrica.org
 - keep any information confidential between you and the person you report this to.
- e) You will cooperate with ACEPO in any investigations of concerns reported under this policy, and keep ACEPO promptly updated on any concerns reported under this policy, including but not limited to actions taken by you in response.

Our principles

Personal Responsibility: All representatives of ACEPO have the responsibility to understand and promote the policy. They must do all that they can to prevent, report and respond appropriately to any concerns or potential breaches of the policy

Universality: ACEPO has adopted a standard based approach to Child Safeguarding. Our safeguarding standards and standards of staff behavior are often higher than those of the national laws and community customs or tradition. Nevertheless, it is our standards that representatives agree to when they join the ACEPO family and it is to these that they will be held to account

Openness: We aim to create an environment in relation to child safeguarding issues, where any issues or concerns can be raised and discussed.

Transparency and accountability: This is essential in order to ensure that poor practice can be addressed, potentially abusive behavior can be challenged and best practice promoted.

Accountability to children and their communities: Through strengthening our internal systems, standards and practices we will be more accountable to the people we aim to serve.

Children participation and non-discrimination: Children should be empowered to understand their rights in this area, and made aware of what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem or a concern.

The best interest of Children involved: When dealing with a Child Safeguarding concern, the best interest of the child will be our priority and we will strive to ensure their safety, health and well-being including meeting their emotional, psychological and physical needs.

Confidentiality: All Child Safeguarding concerns/reports/investigations will be dealt with on a need-to-know basis and all records will be kept securely. Likewise, all communication will be confidential and secure.

Timeliness: Given the potential for increased or repeated abuse, timely responses are essential and the accompanying procedures establish mandatory time limits on reporting and responding to concerns.

Compliance: This policy will be implemented in adherence with the South Sudan Child Act and all other government policies relating to the protection of children.

Partnership: ACEPO will work together with other agencies to promote Child Safeguarding within organizations and Child Protection within the wider community

Please contact any ACEPO representative if you have further questions.